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AN

ESSAY

ON

WASTES IN GENERAL,

AND ON

MOSSWOLD

IN

PARTICULAR.

NORWICH:

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M DCC XCII.

AN

ESSAY

ON

WASTES, &c.

THE Legiſlature of England has not unfrequently enabled the Proprietors of Land to advance their private fortunes, and to increaſe the grain in the kingdom, by granting acts for the cultivation of Waſtes. This appears to have been ſo reaſonable, and ſo conſiſtent with the beauty and wealth of the iſland, that the neglect of Waſte Land muſt be, for the moſt part, attributed to ſupineneſs, or to the imagination of our

being already poſſeſſed of as much wealth as we have occaſion for.

However flouriſhing may be the ſituation of England, a long delay in obvious improvements, on account of ſurrounding, not inſuperable obſtacles, cannot be vindicated, but, on the contrary muſt be a ſubject of general regret. The purport then of this paper is to take a ſlight view of Waſtes, and to touch upon ſome effects which might be produced from the Cultivation of a large Diſtrict in Norfolk, Moſſwold.

The general objection to the cultivation of Commons, &c. is, that the poorer inhabitants ſeem likely to be deprived of thoſe preſumed benefits, which accrue to them from grazing, &c. But the attentive obſerver will find, on a ſurvey of ſuch parts

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of the country, that theſe boaſted advantages may be compenſated, and are ſuch rather in appearance than in reality: witneſs the added rents paid to the land and houſholders, who, in great meaſure, reap *themſelves* the ſlender benefit of Common Land, which ignorance only ſuppoſes appropriated to the ſole uſe of the poor.—Happy for England that ſhe can boaſt of one unerring and preſiding principle, that *her poor muſt be maintained,* and whoſe ſupport would conſequently be effected independent of large waſtes. Beſides, the ſtronger our inducements to the tillage or planting of moſt deſcriptions of land, the better will the iſle be enabled to maintain all orders of men, the more powerful the preventives of migration, a further removal of the nuiſance of beggars, and a more confirmed extirpation of ſloth among ſome parts of our peaſantry.

What conſideration then can be more important to an increaſing people than a creation of freſh ſupplies? In moſt inſtances, with reſpect to the fruits of land, we can renovate; but with reſpect to that part of the earth, into whoſe boſom the plough has never penetrated, quickening her circulation, enabling her to imbibe an increaſed portion of the ſalubrious particles of air, and freely to receive the invigorating qualities of manure—from ſuch proceſs over ſuch parts (wherever they be) have we the ability in a manner to create:—Our conſequent harveſts ought to be a ſufficient ſpur to the further fertilization of Waſte.

The contraſt of European Politics with thoſe of the Romans, who depended more abundantly on uſurpation, proclaim the ſuperior importance to us of all ſuch lands. The quality as well as the quantity of vegetable

table and animal nature being from hence ſo eſſentially heightened, are of courſe objects of far greater attention to us. Our political principles being then built upon a more ſolid foundation, depending more immediately upon our internal ſtrength, require internal exertions far more rigorous than related either to the Romans, or to the more eaſtern countries, where nature, more prolific, produces, in ſuch abundance, her ſpontaneous and luxurious gifts.—The more obſtinate ſoil of our weſtern, and a conſiderable part of the new world, has alſo its advantages, in conferring an energy proportionable to the labour impoſed upon man.—Hence the ſuperior ſtrength of Europeans, whoſe precarious climate has alſo contributed to ſtimulate invention, unſurmiſed even by the more effeminate tribes of Aſiatics.

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Here we muſt obſerve, that the cultivation of land has been laying the foundation of theſe boaſted advantages: and are we to conclude that enough has been done? No—the ſlow and gradual ſteps leading to the perfection of the arts, yet leave us in a condition to aſpire far beyond the preſent compaſs of human attainments.—Whatever therefore may have a tendency to retard the main ſprings of national wealth, ought to be particularly attended to: and thoſe obſtacles to general improvement, which may be deemed, upon ſtrict and impartial examination, ſurmountable, ought to be overcome, by general, if not univerſal application for redreſs. And againſt this reaſoning, neither can the manorial nor the eccleſiaſtical rights of men in juſtice contend.

Hence,

Hence, alſo, muſt neceſſarily follow an increaſe of commerce; which will always be, in ſome degree, proportional to a well-directed cultivation. Its more favourable balance of courſe muſt enſue, by means of freſh-created ſources of exportation.

Were the particular intereſt of individuals (whether the affluent or the poor) likely to be overwhelmed in the general benefit; our further comments would be here ſuſpended:—but an attention to our Waſte Ground refers to the reciprocation of intereſts, which hence may be experienced by all ranks of men.

Wherein conſiſt real riches? Chiefly in raiment, beverage and food.—Were all ranks more fully convinced of this, the ſubject of incloſure would not be reprobated by

by a ſingle individual.—An increaſe of bread ſurely muſt prove deſirable to thoſe who complain of its ſcarcity: the ſcarcity would be diminiſhing by our increaſed tillage, which in general paves the way for an augmentation of wool.—If then (as is true with reſpect to England) a greater quantity of hands are employed in the more luxurious manufactures; a proportionable quantity ought of courſe to be in the agricultural. Such an increaſe of people muſt either oblige us to have further recourſe to other countries for corn, or to cultivate ourſelves more land; which, for the aforementioned reaſons, and the inexhauſtible ſources of additional employments thence derived, muſt be highly deſirable.

America is undoubtedly contributing to other countries: but what preference muſt be due to the corn of our own?—

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of how much greater conſequence is this ſtaff of human exiſtence to various luxuries, whoſe commercial importance depends upon caprice and the fluctuation of faſhion; but whoſe real and intrinſick value, like gold, amounts to no more than they will fetch.

Having hitherto taken a curſory view of Cultivation, whether with reſpect to the food, trade, or wealth which it produces; we have ſtill a few further remarks to offer. In the firſt place, the extent of a Waſte is a queſtion of the greateſt importance: becauſe all land being convertible to permanent uſe, the good attending it muſt, in great meaſure, be proportionable to ſuch extent.—On the other hand, if a Waſte or Common have narrow limits; the expence of a Bill of Incloſure paſſing the Houſe, and the confined range which it admits to ſurrounding farmers and cottagers, renders a

continuance, rather than the incloſure of ſuch Commons, deſirable.

The next conſideration reſpects the *ſoil* of Common Land; which, when it arrives to any particular excellence, and is found to adminiſter to the exigencies of the induſtrious, renders almoſt any alienation of it repugnant to humanity.—In no caſe more than this can the accidental difference betwixt the very poor and the rich demand, not only the ſympathy of the latter, but the ſevereſt ſcrutiny, how far, on the principles of juſtice, *application even* ſhould be made for the incloſure of ſuch Common Lands.—Here we muſt obſerve, that in *any* caſe, *more* than adequate compenſation ought to be made to the poor: ſince, ſays an enlightened writer *, " No advantage is

* See a Pamphlet under the title of " An Inquiry into the Advantages and Diſadvantages reſulting from Bills of Incloſure." *Cadell.* 1780.

gained,

gained by a violation of private right and property, which might not equally be obtained without it." If then, along with the benefit to the proprietors, the cottagers are not bettered by aſſigning over to them proportionable allotments of land; every attempt to incloſe or cultivate ought to be prohibited.—Reaſon even revolts at the idea of oppreſſing the oppreſſed—On the other hand, we have every motive to allow ſcope to the earth's ability, in any ſituation, for pouring forth her fruits to the induſtrious.

The *means* therefore employed in the purſuit of more extenſive cultivation, muſt either deſerve cenſure or praiſe.—A further inveſtigation of the *means* will (we hope) produce a more obvious union of the intereſts of all parties, and which, in England, if properly attended to, may realize

Mentor's

Mentor's ideal Deſcription of Crete; where the plough left every where her deep furrows—where on all ſides were to be ſeen well-built villages, and no ſpot was to be found on which the hand of induſtry had not imprinted her ſtamp.—How inapplicable this deſcription to thoſe Waſtes in our country, which yet produce only the mere ſpontaneities and crudities of the earth!—Veſtiges of the abject condition of mankind in the earlieſt and moſt barbarous ages.—If we liſten to true policy, theſe yet unaſſiſted parts of nature will be riſing to a full grown and maſculine ſtrength, to be effected only by an application of labour to thoſe mines which land is yet continually offering; againſt which nothing now can operate, but indolence or the fear of inſurrection; which may certainly be obviated by zeal and activity, and ſuch liberal conceſſions to pariſhes or cottagers as

humanity

humanity requires, and to which in equity they are entitled.

Now that we have endeavoured to eſtabliſh the intereſt which the lower orders of community may be made to have in the improvement of the country; we cannot here forbear remarking, that Norwich, though ſituated cloſe to a large diſtrict of almoſt barren though cultivable land, has nevertheleſs been in the practice of addreſſing his Majeſty on the ſubject of the high price of corn. Had the inhabitants been more intent upon their true intereſts, Moſſwold muſt before now have proved a ſubject of greater regard. But men are for a long time inclined to adhere to the errors of their predeceſſors. Happily for Britons, however, they have of late years been treading over their conſecrated grounds with a compoſure and ſatisfaction attending the knowledge

knowledge of their greater uſe, when dedicated to the wholeſome employment and ſuſtenance of the human race, than when made a vehicle for the purpoſes of ſuperſtition.—Thus, as heretofore our monaſteries fed a numerous and idle poor, ſo zeal for the exterior of ſanctity is converted into a more confirmed antidote to vice, *the employment of the idle.*—The ſteps towards progreſſive improvement are not at an end; the gradual reſtoration of thoſe rights, which nature offers to mankind, and which the ignorance more than the pride of men are yet depriving us of, is highly deſirable. It is then to be wiſhed, that the improved ſtate of ſociety in a country "where pre-eminent merit cannot fail to attain to an elevated point of public conſideration," will induce the further exertions of thoſe, whoſe talents and influence demand attention; which may redound to the abolition of

every

every abſurd prejudice, to the favouring of commutation whenever required, to enable us to raiſe our rates, to increaſe our wool and timber, in fact, to make manifeſt the union of private with the publick intereſt; which muſt be intimately connected with the cultivation of Waſte.

We muſt now for a moment dwell on the diſtinction betwixt Common and Heath, as introductory to ſome leading comments on Moſſwold.

Heaths are, generally ſpeaking, barren Waſtes:—Commons, receptacles of the cattle of neighbouring farmers, &c. which although capable of infinitely greater produce by cultivation, than while remaining in a ſtate of nature, apologize, in ſome degree, by their general contributions to

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the farmers, cottagers, &c. for their continuance.

Now it muſt be obſerved, that Moſſwold, for the greateſt part, anſwers the deſcription of *mere* heath; yet poſſeſſes almoſt all the variety of ſoil neceſſary to render it highly fruitful.—The quantity of loam and clay which it produces, its no great diſtance from marl, along with its general capability of improvement, are facts highly favouring our poſition.

But before we enter further on the ſubject of Cultivation, we cannot forbear ſtating the ſentiments of our Author, that before any further incloſure take place, the Legiſlature ought to provide a remedy for thc evil attending Incloſures to Cottagers, &c.—I am here, however, ſuppoſing, that ſo valuable as this large diſtrict

trict might be rendered, ſo various as are the intereſts, and ſo numerous as may be the virtues of thoſe concerned in it, that its culture would not be permitted to take place, unleſs *all the parties* were indemnified: I am ſuppoſing, that its importance would of itſelf prevent inadvertency of proceeding, or the rapacity of individuals, who might be aiming at claims not founded in ſtrict juſtice: and I am ſuppoſing, that the individuals concerned are too numerous for their views and intereſts to be concealed, and to terminate even in partial evil; that ſuch even would be the virtue of our repreſentatives, that an addreſs to Parliament for paſſing a Bill for the Incloſure of Moſſwold would not be conſented to, unleſs either the Legiſlature produce the neceſſary indemnification to the parties, or unleſs the Proprietors themſelves will have agreed to ſuch general redreſs as ſhall be thought

conſiſtent with the intereſt of the whole.—One or other of theſe preliminaries is highly deſirable, and ought to be held eſſential; ſince in any caſe, the advantage accruing from culture to the proprietors would be great.—The general good ought, therefore, to be conſulted, in which the cottager ought to have his portion of intereſt.

The path towards its execution not yet being paved, ought not to ſuffer even the unintereſted ſpectator to admit an idea of the parties relinquiſhing a plan, which muſt be allowed important, even in a national as well as private view.

Let us elucidate this ſubject ſtill further. Firſt then, nothing would ſooner engage the general approbation, or be more likely to facilitate the plan, than an exhibition of generous ſentiments among the largeſt

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of the proprietors:—Since every good conſequence might be derived from union, to be effected only by a liberal and generous procedure.—If ſucceſs depends upon union, every method ought to be adopted to conciliate the parties.—So far for the motives of the proprietors: which, if they were acknowledged good and generous, would introduce the probability of their favourable iſſue. If then the changes which have taken place in the minds of men have tended to extend their operations;—If paſſion be increaſed by difficulties, why ſhould obſtacles, not inſurmountable, prevent a change in the minds of the intereſted, on a ſubject in which a general compatibility of intereſts may be experienced. If it would increaſe the quantity of proviſions brought into the Norwich market; would it not in a degree tend to a diminution of the price of commodities brought into it,

and ſo neceſſary in a place where the mechanic's pay has by no means increaſed proportionably with the advanced price of proviſions?—Nothing ſurely, in a city, where the introduction of freſh manufactures, as well as an increaſe of its own, are taking place, can be more deſirable than an improved agriculture on the adjacent barren ſpots, tending alſo to invigorate the dwindled race of ſome, who might be allured out of it. Whilſt then a ſuperior ſagacity is becoming applied to external nature; whilſt our ſkill in adapting materials to the ſeveral purpoſes of life is dayly improving;—What a reflection! to ſtop the career of improvement in a matter ſo obvious and laudable! if this want of culture could not be remedied; nothing further needs be advanced—But the admirable improvements with reſpect to Waſtes of late years, have been owing to the ex-

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cellency of our laws. To accompliſh the purpoſe then to which this paper is directed cannot be deemed a work requiring the moſt invincible fortitude, or the moſt perſevering patience. The legiſlature of this country liſtens to the juſt remonſtrances of its ſubjects; who have only to recommend in proper form whatever relates to improvement. This truth ſhould be more and more attended to, in order to juſtify M. D'Avenant's remark, 'That there is no ſpot, let it be ever ſo diſtant, but what muſt be bettered by the growth of the metropolis.' Is it ſo yet with Moſſwold? which, although ſo extenſive, ought, ſcarcely, in its preſent ſtate, to be called a part of the territory of England. What then, under ſuch circumſtances, ought to be recommended? To draw a map* of the

* In doing this, the moſt ſcrupulous accuracy would not be neceſſary: ſuffice that ſuch rough outlines were drawn as to give a general idea of ground work for fair and liberal partition.

whole

whole track: which, when executed, would exhibit, to all concerned, the power inherent in themſelves, to effect, by wiſe counſels and a liberality of procedure, all the deſirable changes attending its cultivation: ſince, whatever of indefiniteneſs or obſcurity might appear, with reſpect to right, on particular particular parts of it, would neceſſarily yield to an eventual accommodation, by reference to commiſſioners or arbitrators: their deciſions would heal diviſion and cancel miſunderſtanding: vegetation would immediately thrive and crown the wiſhes of the parties with laurels of well earned gain.

Nor does our argument go in favour of the unlimited Incloſure of the Heath; it being a poſition generally admitted, that ſheep require a fenceleſs ſcope of at leaſt 50 acres for their due and proper range.—

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In ſuch caſes a proportionable deducted inincloſure ought undoubtedly to be ſecured. Suffice it to ſay in this place, that a few ſheep-walks, agreeably diſperſed, would be no impediment to the general Incloſure of Moſſwold—Suffice that it be the earneſt endeavour of the Proprietors to circulate the yet ſtagnant juices of this palſied giant. Neither does it appear impoſſible, but that ſome parts of this wide track might be ſet apart for purpoſes of a philanthropic nature. Againſt this it may be objected by ſome, that providence affixes narrow bounds to our undertakings; which muſt be limited to the accompliſhment of one ſingle object: whilſt others are of opinion, that two and tenfold purpoſes may be derived from a ſingle undertaking. And if Charity may be permitted to drop a tear in favour of orphans and of vagrants' offſprings, ſhe may here introduce ſuch into the habits of labour,

labour, who might otherwiſe become peſts to ſociety.

I ſee not the impoſſibility of obtaining the free and general conſent of the parties, along with the ſanction of the Legiſlature, to make this place become an ornament even to the age we live in. I ſee rather that it is within the reach of common contrivance, provided that wilful ignorance and obſtinacy do not miſlead the parties into a determined oppoſition to their own intereſts.—What is it but a generous pliability and invention which have raiſed this iſland to its preſent height of proſperity? A curſory view proclaims the wheels of improvement to be accelerating with a quick motion: witneſs our improved chemiſtry—our canals, which tend, in a thouſand ways to increaſe our riches—Is Norfolk then ſtill for ages to be a ſpectator of

a wide Waſte, over various parts of which nature has been extremely bountiful, almoſt totally uſeleſs, on account of various difficulties attending its improvement, ſurely not: a ſucceſſion of well-timed hints it is to be hoped, will introduce freſh ſymptoms of attention to it, and contribute to its ſpringing and germinant cultivation.

When gathering men their natural powers combin'd,
To form a publick, for the general good,
* * * * * * * * *
And with joint force oppreſſion chaining, ſet
Imperial Juſtice at the helm. THOMSON.

Under ſuch circumſtances what ſtores of untouched bliſs and riches is Moſſwold continually offering to view! what ſlavery or impotence, to withhold a complaint againſt that laſſitude which alone muſt occaſion the yet much lengthened continuance of its dreary aſpect.

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